

Information for breastfeeding families

Weaning Your Breastfeeding Baby



The World Health Organization suggests exclusive breastfeeding for six months. At that time, you can begin adding solid foods, and continue breastfeeding; breastmilk should be the main food during the first year of life. Continue until 2 years old or longer, as desired by baby and you.

Weaning can be easy or difficult. First, make sure it is what you want. When it has been such a warm, loving experience, it is sometimes hard to let that go and move on to the next stage. Think it through, and if you are certain, then you will send clear messages to your baby.

Mother-led Weaning

Mother-led weaning means you decide when the time is right. Drop one breastfeeding (or pumping session) per week and replace it with a formula feeding or solid foods. If you are breastfeeding 8 times each day, then it would take 8 weeks to completely wean.

This is a slow gentle way for your baby to be transferred to another method of feeding and for you to reduce your milk supply. Some mothers like to keep one feeding for a longer period of time, such as a bedtime feeding.

You may accelerate this schedule if necessary by dropping one feeding every 2-3 days. If your breasts become engorged, use ice to your breasts to help with discomfort. Remember to hug your baby to help with the transition.

Baby-led Weaning

Baby-led means toddlers lose interest and wean on their own.

This may begin as they increase solid food intake and become busy world explorers. Baby-led weaning is a gradual process occurring over several months. Follow your child's lead!

A handy reminder for this type of weaning is: **Don't offer; don't refuse.**

Post-pone Weaning If:

- Baby or mother is sick or hospitalized
- Family is traveling, during holiday periods or other times of unusual stress
- Baby is teething
- Mother has mastitis
- Baby is in a growth spurt

You may experience a sense of sadness and loss during weaning. This is partly due to the change in the relationship with your baby, and partly due to the changes in hormones from breastfeeding. Observe your breasts for lumps, and "hot spots". Massage them during feedings until they go away. You may hand express milk or use a breast pump at any time that you are uncomfortably full just to relieve the fullness. If you develop a fever, red tender area, or lump that will not go away, contact your Provider. Sage and peppermint may help reduce supply. You may also apply ice or cabbage leaves to your breasts several times per day .